UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM
Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health
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by
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SB 2678 – RELATING TO DENTAL HYGIENISTS

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this bill, SB 2678.

Dental hygiene education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa began in 1931. The Bachelor of Science in dental hygiene program at the School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH) was established in 1983 and is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, American Dental Association. Dental hygienists are preventive oral health professionals, licensed in dental hygiene, who provide educational, clinical and therapeutic services that support total health through the promotion of optimal oral health.

Dental hygiene is a professional discipline that plays an integral role in meeting the population's oral health care needs. Across the nation, the profession continues to evolve and the dental hygienists' scope of practice are also changing while Hawai'i's rules are limiting. The integration of oral health into overall health, technological advances, healthcare reform strategies, and the commitment to meet community needs continues to change the professional role of the dental hygienist. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) is requiring the fields of dentistry and dental hygiene to make changes in how services are provided and recognize the interconnectedness of healthcare providers. Dental practice acts vary by state, and it is beneficial for Hawai'i to keep pace with national changes in practice acts and to increase access to oral care.

SONDH believes dental hygiene should have its own board of examiners apart from the board of examiners who oversee dentists. Furthermore, SONDH suggests a friendly amendment regarding the composition of the proposed board of dental hygienist examiners' to include the expertise and perspective of dental hygiene education. We

respectfully suggest an addition to the proposed language in SB 2678 for §447-B Board of dental hygienists examiners; appointment, section (a) to read:

> "The board of dental hygienist examiners shall consist of seven members, four of whom shall be practicing hygienists who have been engaged in the practice of dental hygiene for a period of five years preceding their appointments and duly licensed under section 447-1, **one of whom will be a dental hygiene educator**, two of whom shall be dentists who are also appointed to the board of dental examiners, and one of whom shall be a public member. No member shall be in any way connected with, or interested financially in, any dental supply company."

Therefore, the SONDH respectfully requests that you pass SB 2678 with an amendment. We appreciate your continuing support of health in Hawai'i. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.